

scrutiny, and we proved it would actually cost money to close Ellsworth. We also pressed the Commissioners not to put all of our eggs in one basket when it comes to our Nation's security interests, highlighting the organizational risk of consolidating all of our B-1s at one location. The outlook was grim, but we stood our ground and we won the day and we were removed from the BRAC list that August.

But we didn't stop there. We got right to work on building up the base so that we would never again find ourselves in the same position. In 2007, we saw the Air Force Financial Services Center open at Ellsworth; 2011, saw the arrival of the 89th Attack Squadron and its command and control stations for MQ-9 Reapers. In 2015, a decade-long mission paid off with the quadrupling of the training airspace for the base. The Powder River Training Complex is now the largest training airspace in the continental United States and can be used for large-force exercises that draw combat aircraft from across the country, and it is well suited for B-21 training. This is just one of the efforts that we undertook to put Ellsworth in the best position possible to secure this new mission, and it is wonderful to see it pay off with yesterday's announcement.

I know that while South Dakota is celebrating today, others are disappointed in this decision. For those who were seeking to have the Main Operating Base 1 in their State but will now follow Ellsworth in the sequencing and wait a little longer for the B-21 mission to arrive, know this: My support for the B-21 enterprise will not lessen because we are at this milestone.

As I said, we argued 15 years ago that the United States should not put all its eggs in one basket when it comes to strategic assets. I stand by that reasoning to this day. Under the current bomber roadmap, every bomber base will keep a bomber mission well into the future. The Stealth B-21 will eventually replace our B-1s and Stealth B-2s at bases around the country. Meanwhile, our fleet of B-52s will be given new modern engines through a service life extension program. All of our bomber bases which have played and continue to play an essential role in our national security will continue to do so. Long-range strike will remain a team effort.

The core of our military strength is our men and women in uniform. They volunteer to lay down their lives, if necessary, in the service of our Nation, and it is incumbent on us here in Congress to do our part to ensure that they have the tools they need to succeed in their missions.

The B-21 is an essential part of that equation. I remind my colleagues that the United States is one of only three countries in the world that operate a strategic bomber. The other two countries are Russia and China, and they are both working to develop their own

next-generation bombers. We cannot afford to cede any ground.

The B-21 is scheduled to take its first flight in 2022 and should enter service around 2027. It will replace our aging B-1s, which have proven a workhorse over the last several decades, as well as two squadrons of B-2s.

But our small bomber fleet is growing smaller. Seventeen of the most structurally fatigued B-1s are being retired this year, which has actually permitted maintainers to concentrate resources on the remaining aircraft. Flight hours are up, and the B-1 has been a key component of the new Bomber Task Force missions.

But that doesn't mean a smaller bomber force is sustainable in the long run without reinvestment and modernization. Our national security requires that the B-21 Program move full-speed ahead. Fortunately, public reports indicate the B-21 Program is on-budget and on-time. "B-21 speeds to IOC," or initial operating capacity, reads a headline recently from June 3.

In an interview, the Air Force Global Strike Commander, Gen. Timothy Ray, detailed the agile and adaptive B-21 process. He noted that adding certain capabilities to the bombers could take one-tenth of the time it has for previous airframes.

The ability to incrementally add new capabilities and upgrades, instead of being forced to make wholesale block upgrades, should keep B-21 development moving quickly. And Congress—Congress can do its part by providing stable funding for the B-21.

Now, with the record of decision for Main Operating Base 1 signed, we also need to restart in earnest on the investments necessary to prepare Ellsworth for the B-21. We can now get to work building the high-end maintenance facilities for the B-21's stealth coating, training, and operations buildings for the new missions and a secure weapons facility for the nuclear mission.

Ellsworth has come a long way since it was placed on the chopping block 16 years ago.

I am grateful to the Air Force for this decision and the hard work by so many to get us here today. From BRAC to B-21, I am humbled to have been a small part of this effort, and I remain steadfast in my support for the mission and the men and women of the 28th Bomb Wing. I can't wait to get to work on this new chapter of Ellsworth's story.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Republican leader is recognized.

#### ECONOMY

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, this morning, the Labor Department announced that it had observed the largest uptick in prices since the depths of the great recession back in 2008, and core inflation has reached a nearly three-decade high.

The latest data reinforced what too many Americans have already been experiencing firsthand: The Biden administration's partisan spending bill has blunted our Nation's economic recovery with higher prices at the gas pump and the grocery store, a tougher time for small businesses trying to staff up, and unemployment policies that incentivize too many Americans to simply stay on the sidelines.

Republicans and outside economists warned that the worst of these conditions actually could have been avoided, but Democrats chose to go it alone. As recently as a few days ago, it appeared that President Biden was open to a new, more consultative approach to major legislation. He and the leading Republican on a committee of jurisdiction were engaged in what appeared to be good-faith, bipartisan negotiations on infrastructure spending, but then the President decided to walk away.

Now, at the White House's direction, Democrats in Congress are making preparations to muscle through a bloated spending bill on a unilateral, partisan basis, and it is becoming clear that the sort of united, bipartisan action Ranking Member CAPITO has made possible within the EPW Committee is getting harder and harder to replicate.

The bipartisanship that has defined infrastructure policy for years is becoming the exception to Democrats' new partisan rule. It might have something to do with the fact that our Democratic friends have taken to using "infrastructure" as a code for a growing wish list of unrelated liberal spending.

The Biden administration's first infrastructure plan made that much clear from its rollout back in March. Remember, this was a multitrillion-dollar bill that proposed to spend more on electric vehicles than on actual roads and bridges. It contained so many leftwing pet projects that the authors of the Green New Deal boasted about just how much of their manifesto's DNA had actually rubbed off.

Well, the administration's approach clearly influenced a number of Democrats right here in the Senate. Last month, on the same day that Chairman CARPER and Ranking Member CAPITO were guiding a surface transportation bill to a unanimous vote, the Finance Committee was busy marking up a partisan plan to pick winners and losers in the market for reliable domestic energy.

Just this week, we watched their go-it-alone approach replicated by Democrats over in the House. The Transportation and Infrastructure Committee had a perfect opportunity to reach consensus on surface transportation. Our